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Soviet Naval Policy and Programs

NIE 11-15-74

SOVIET NAVAL POLICY AND PROGRAMS

THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS, EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT, AS FOLLOWS:

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and Defense, and the National Security Agency.

Concurring:

The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence representing the Central Intelligence Agency

The Director of Intelligence and Research representing the Department of State

The Director, Defense Intelligence Agency

The Director, National Security Agency

The Assistant General Manager for National Security representing the Atomic Energy Commission

Abstaining:

The Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury representing the Department of the Treasury

The Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation

ALSO PARTICIPATING:

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

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SOVIET NAVAL POLICY AND PROGRAMS

PRINCIPAL JUDGMENTS

— A primary mission of the Soviet Navy is to furnish a deterrent to attack through the presence of a credible and survivable SSBN force, and, in time of general war, to participate in the nuclear exchange and strike at soft targets such as military installations, industries and government centers.

- The Soviets routinely maintain five of their operational SSBNs on station. The Soviets also appear to keep[   ]SSBNs ready for deployment[   ] the majority of these— the Y-class SSBNs—will take about a week to ten days to reach station after notice. This will change appreciably during the next decade since increasing numbers of D-class submarines will be within missile range upon leaving home port.

- Under conditions of sufficient warning to get additional forces to firing stations, the Soviets might currently expect as many as 400 sea-based missiles to reach their targets in an initial strike. Under conditions of no warning, successful NATO damage limiting operations, delays in command and control procedures, or deliberate Soviet decisions, the Soviets might be able to launch only a few score missiles from the Y-class and D-class SSBNs.

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- The Soviets are attempting to increase the survivability of their SSBN force in several ways. They are constructing tunnels near SSBN bases suitable for concealment and protection of the submarines and have built dummy SSBNs probably to conceal deployment levels during crises or to mislead NATO targeting.

- We expect the Soviet SSBN force to expand to 62 modern units by the late 1970s. The 62nd unit is probably already under construction, and we believe all of them will be completed. If the proposed SAL Agreement covering the 1977-1985 period is successfully concluded, the Soviets will be limited to a total of 2,400 delivery vehicles—ICBMs, SLBMs, and intercontinental bombers—with no sublimit on SLBMs. This would require some reductions in the numbers and probably some changes in the mix of Soviet strategic forces. We believe the Soviets will retain a force at the level of 62 modern SSBNs until about 1980. But pressures will mount for change in the mix of strategic forces in the 1980s and we are uncertain how these will affect the SSBN force.[1]

- An extensive program to refit new and probably MIRVed missiles to the force is expected to start in the late 1970s, and to continue through the mid-1980s.

— The Soviets continue to believe that a war with the West will probably evolve into a short nuclear conflict, but they also see some increasing likelihood that a war could begin, and perhaps even remain, at a conventional level. Soviet doctrine calls for the earliest possible destruction of enemy nuclear capabilities, including naval, in the early phases of a conventional conflict. Because the Soviets think it unlikely that a war with the West would remain conventional, we believe that they would seek to destroy SSBNs in the early stages of a conflict. However, it is possible, if the Soviets saw the opportunity to contain the conflict at conventional levels and given the low probability that they could actually destroy an SSBN, that the Soviet leadership would direct the Navy to refrain from attacking SSBNs in order to reduce the chances of escalation.

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[1] The Defense Intelligence Agency calls attention to its footnote 10 on page 34.

— We do not believe that the Soviets would choose to engage in a war conducted only at sea between the major powers. Soviet wartime naval operations are seen as closely related to war developments on the Eurasian landmass.

— Soviet capabilities for combating Western carrier strike forces—to them a first priority task—include forces for the surveillance of NATO carrier task forces in peacetime, and a combination of air, submarine and surface forces for the destruction of those NATO carrier task forces in war.

- We believe that, given time to coordinate all of their surveillance assets, the Soviets would probably be able to locate and track most US aircraft carriers in the northeastern Atlantic, Norwegian Sea, northwestern Pacific Ocean and the eastern Mediterranean. We believe that coordinated strikes against Western carriers in these areas would be at least partially successful.

- The degree of success would depend upon the location of the carriers, whether the Soviets use conventional or nuclear weapons, and whether surprise were achieved. If nuclear weapons were used in a surprise attack, most of the carriers in these areas could be destroyed. On the other hand, timely warning of a Soviet attack would allow the carriers to take action which would probably assure the survival of some carriers, especially against a conventional attack.

- We expect the Soviets to maintain the high priority on combating enemy aircraft carrier task forces. Cruise-missile submarines will continue to be built throughout the 1970s, as will major surface ships with antiship missiles. The SS-NX-13 antiship nuclear ballistic missile will most likely enter the force in the next year or two.⌐

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— The strike capability of the Soviet Navy against Western surface forces will be significantly improved by the deployment with Soviet Naval Aviation of the BACKFIRE ASM strike aircraft. The BACKFIRE's increased range capability will give it coverage over all the major sea lanes leading to Europe and extend Pacific Ocean cover-

age to Hawaii—areas that were formerly out of range of the strike aircraft of the Soviet Navy. Equally important, BACKFIRE's capability for high-subsonic, low-level flight will also give it a better chance than the BADGER of successfully crossing potentially hostile land areas such as Turkey and Greece in order to operate over the Mediterranean, an area over which, in practical terms, the Soviets could not now operate their naval strike aircraft. The BACKFIRE's variable-flight profile and high-speed capabilities—Mach 2 at high altitudes—will give it a higher probability of penetrating carrier defenses in the open ocean than is the case with the BADGER aircraft.

— Soviet capabilities for antisubmarine warfare—countering Western SSBNs and defending against attacks from Western general purpose submarines—are inadequate:

- We expect the Soviets to continue to pursue various approaches to antisubmarine warfare, with emphasis on the anti-SSBN problem. Improved ASW sensors and supporting systems and stand-off weapons will be more extensively deployed. The construction rate of ASW submarines probably will increase.

- Although we believe the Soviets in wartime would attempt to attack Western SSBNs, they have no effective capability to do so in the open ocean and will probably not acquire such a capability during the next decade.[2] However, we cannot exclude the possibility that the Soviets might be able to detect a few SSBNs in limited areas such as the western approach to the Barents Sea or in strategic choke points such as the Greenland-Iceland-UK gap.

- We do not expect that Soviet forces will have systems for the reliable detection of Western attack submarines beyond the range of the latter's weapon systems during the period of this Estimate

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[2] The Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency believes that several of the nonacoustic methods currently known to be under investigation by the Soviets offer potential for improving their detection of nuclear submarines and thus could provide them with a capability to threaten the survivability of a portion of the US SSBN force deployed in the open ocean. The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy, and the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force, share this view.

— The Soviet and other Warsaw Pact navies have concentrated large numbers of small coastal patrol, ASW, and minewarfare ships, short-range submarines, and ASW aircraft in the Black, Baltic and Barents Seas and the Sea of Japan to secure their sea frontiers in time of war. These forces continue to receive the latest Soviet equipment and have some significant capabilities against Western forces. The Soviets and other Warsaw Pact navies could probably establish control over the Baltic and Black Seas early in a conflict, and plant mines to prevent penetrations by Western naval forces. In the Sea of Japan and in the Barents Sea, enemy surface units could be destroyed quickly, but Western nuclear submarines would pose a more difficult problem and the Soviets probably could not protect their ships from this threat.

— The Soviets and their Warsaw Pact allies maintain amphibious forces in the Barents Sea area, in the Baltic and Black Seas, and in the Sea of Japan. The effectiveness of operations of these forces would probably vary widely. The North Cape of Norway could probably be taken fairly readily if the Norwegian brigade normally deployed there were not reinforced. In the Baltic, Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces could probably capture the Danish islands, if the Danish air and ground forces on Zealand were not reinforced, and link up with land forces attacking Jutland. In the Black Sea area, strong Turkish defenses and difficult terrain would make a coordinated land and sea assault on the Turkish straits more difficult. The Soviets probably could not seize these Straits quickly using conventional weapons. Soviet Naval Infantry capabilities in the Pacific are insufficient for conducting amphibious assaults on the Japanese home islands to secure exits from the Sea of Japan.

— We believe that, if a conventional war in Europe were to continue for some time, the Soviets would probably mount an interdiction campaign against Western sea lines of communications. The Soviets would have major problems in doing so. They do not have forward bases for resupply, and attempts to operate their small number of resupply ships beyond Soviet-controlled waters could be easily countered. Thus their submarines would almost certainly have to return through choke points to an uncertain resupply situation.

Moreover, the North Atlantic sea lanes are basically beyond the range of all but BEAR and BACKFIRE aircraft. In a prolonged conventional conflict, therefore, the Soviets could effect attrition on NATO shipping, but could not disrupt it completely. We believe it unlikely that, outside of direct involvement in a war with the West, the USSR would attack Western sea lines of communication, however vulnerable.

— We do not believe the Soviets are building naval forces for intervention in distant areas against substantial opposition nor do we believe they have much capability for such intervention now.

— Soviet ability to sustain combat at sea for long periods would be severely circumscribed by logistics-related weaknesses. Most of the new larger Soviet surface combatants have no reloads for their major offensive weapons systems, and the ships' limited underway replenishment capability constrain Soviet abilities for sustained combat at sea. The current forward posture of the Soviet Navy depends upon the support of auxiliaries and merchant ships in anchorages and in Third World ports, and presumes a non-hostile environment.

— Since the mid-1960s, the Soviet Navy has diversified its areas of operation. However, the rapid growth rate in naval activity away from home waters that characterized the late 1960s has slowed in the 1970s. Virtually the only increase in the last four years has been related to unusual circumstances such as minesweeping operations in 1974 in the Gulf of Suez and the Bangladesh harbor-clearing operations in 1971. We believe that the majority of the Soviet out-of-area operations, especially those in the Norwegian Sea and the Pacific Ocean, have been related primarily to training for operations against Western navies. But we also believe that many of the Soviet out-of-area operations reflect a Soviet decision to use naval forces more extensively in furthering Soviet foreign policy objectives in peacetime.

— Through their naval operations in peacetime the Soviet leadership has sought to influence US actions at some cost and risk while at the same time keeping to a minimum the chances of actual US-Soviet conflict. We expect this approach to continue.

— We believe that the level of Soviet naval out-of-area activity is approaching practical limits, given the USSR's current priorities. Over the longer term, as newer more capable ships enter the force, there will be a moderate but steady increase in the number of ships available for distant operations. Any rapid increase in sustained distant deployment probably would require a more intensive ship-building effort, not only of surface combatants, but also of logistic support ships.

— Naval activity and port visits, particularly in the Third World, probably have improved the Soviet Union's position with some foreign political leaders, but it has irritated others. Still others—perhaps a majority of Third World leaders—show little outward concern about Soviet naval deployments. Nevertheless, in many countries, especially developed countries with a maritime tradition, naval activity is perceived as an important element in the international political balance. As long as this view continues to be prominent, the Soviet Navy's peacetime operations will have significant political impact.

— We believe that future Soviet naval developments will bear a strong resemblance to the current trends. Given the bureaucratic continuities in Soviet naval efforts and the Navy's apparently integral place in Soviet policies with regard to the US, NATO, and the Third World, there is not much chance for the Navy to lose its position. However, given the general resource problems in the USSR, we do not expect substantial gains for the Navy at the expense of others. We thus expect basic changes to the current line to come about slowly, if at all.

— The Soviet Navy has been widely perceived as equal to or even superior to the US Navy, despite the many asymmetries in the two forces. This perception has given the Soviet Navy a degree of credibility which, while not always fully supported by its combat capabilities, has made it an important element in calculations of international political power.

DISCUSSION

Preface

1. Over the last decade or so there have been important changes in Soviet naval policies and programs as well as significant improvements in the USSR's naval capabilities. Beginning with the naval programs emphasized largely under Khrushchev, the Soviet Navy has evolved from a force oriented to the defense of the Soviet maritime frontiers to a navy structured in addition for war-fighting on the high seas and for use as an instrument in support of Soviet foreign policy in peacetime. Only recently have the Soviets considered their Navy to be an important instrument in supporting their foreign policy objectives in many areas of the world. This use has brought the Soviet Navy into frequent contact with the West and into situations where its presence and activities have increased the risk of conflict as well as the hope of gain to the Soviets. This Estimate describes Soviet naval policies and programs, and the capabilities of the Soviet Navy both for war-fighting and for peacetime operations in distant waters.

I. FORCE COMPOSITION AND READINESS

2. The Soviets describe nuclear submarines and naval aviation as the main striking forces of their Navy, but they also maintain a large surface force. The active Navy currently has some 325 submarines, 220 major and 1,300 minor surface combatants, 750 auxiliary ships, and 1,250 naval aircraft. The submarine force has nuclear- and diesel-powered ballistic missile, cruise-missile, and torpedo-attack submarines. The major surface force is about equally divided between ocean going escorts and larger ships of destroyer and cruiser size. Minor surface combatants include mine warfare ships, submarine chasers, and patrol craft, primarily for operations in coastal waters. Soviet Naval Aviation has three

principal components—antiship strike, reconnaissance, and antisubmarine warfare (ASW) aircraft. Except for a few helicopters which are carried on surface ships, Naval Aviation is a land-based force.

3. The Soviet Navy is organized into four major fleets: the Northern, Baltic, Black Sea and Pacific Ocean (see Figure 1). The Northern and Pacific Ocean Fleets have all of the ballistic missile submarines [3] and carry the burden of the open-ocean missions—countering Western naval forces and interdicting sea communications. The Baltic and Black Sea Fleets are tailored for control of these seas and for the support of land operations along their shores and at their entrances. The non-Soviet Warsaw Pact (NSWP) countries contribute to the latter missions. The Black Sea Fleet furnishes most of the surface ships, and the Northern Fleet the submarines, for Mediterranean Sea operations. Most Indian Ocean deployments come from the Pacific Fleet. Table I shows the roles and disposition of selected Soviet and NSWP naval forces.

Readiness

4. Soviet surface ships and submarines are kept in several stages of readiness. About one-half—including those units routinely deployed to forward areas—are ready for operations within a day or two. [   ] An additional [   ] are in limited readiness and would be able to put to sea only with reduced stores and crew and at reduced combat effectiveness. The remainder are in overhaul and modernization and would not be ready even in 90 days. In addition to these active forces, there are numbers of older ships and submarines in an

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* See NIE 11-3/8-74, *Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Conflict Through 1985*, for a further discussion of Soviet SLBM forces.

Figure 1

Disposition of Soviet Naval Forces

Northern Fleet
45 Ballistic missile submarines
54 Major surface ships
128 General purpose submarines
198 Major aircraft

Baltic Fleet
0 Ballistic missile submarines
47 Major surface ships
22 General purpose submarines
182 Major aircraft

Black Sea Fleet
0 Ballistic missile submarines
58 Major surface ships
24 General purpose submarines
143 Major aircraft

Pacific Fleet
25 Ballistic missile submarines
57 Major surface ships
80 General purpose submarines
225 Major aircraft

inactive status which would also require more than 90 days to become combat ready. Three-fourths of Soviet naval aircraft could be ready with no advance notice, and all but 10 percent within 5 to 10 days.

II. WARTIME MISSIONS AND EFFECTIVENESS

5. The Soviet Navy's major missions in wartime are nuclear strike or deterrence against escalation, blunting the effects of enemy nuclear strikes, and supporting ground operations on the Eurasian continent. The first is accomplished by the Soviet SSBN forces. The second involves both anticarrier and anti-SSBN forces. The last involves controlling the sea frontiers of the USSR out to several hundred miles to ensure that enemy naval forces cannot support the land war while permitting Soviet naval forces to do so. It also involves, especially in a prolonged conflict, operations against sea lines of communication, particularly in the vicinity of the Eurasian continent, to prevent reinforcement and supply of NATO.

Soviet Views of the Nature, Course, and Tasks of a War With the US

6. Over the past several years there have been numerous Soviet discussions of the possibility of conflict at both nuclear and nonnuclear levels in continental theaters of a world war. [

] some loosening of older rigid Soviet scenarios in which escalation to general war was viewed as virtually inevitable. This loosening has led to a situation in which war in Europe—and associated naval activity—is seen as possibly starting at the conventional level. The Soviets see a growing likelihood of this, but they still emphasize the strong likelihood that the US and NATO will be compelled to escalate to nuclear levels. They apparently do not expect to initiate the widespread use of nuclear weapons, except in a major preemptive strike in Europe when they become convinced that NATO will go beyond the limited use of nuclear weapons.

TABLE 1

DISPOSITION OF SELECTED ACTIVE SOVIET AND NSWP NAVAL FORCES (1 Dec 1974)

Mission	System	Class	Northern	Baltic	Black	Pacific	Total
Deterrence/Strike	Modern SSBNs	D, Y	28 (424)[1]	0	0	11 (176)[1]	39 (600)[1]
	Older SSBNs, SSBs	H SSBN, G SSB	17 (54)[1]	0	0	14 (42)[1]	31 (96)[1]
General Purpose (open ocean, ASW, antiship)	Nuclear Attack Submarines	V, U, N, E-I, A	25	0	0	12	37
	Missile Submarines	J, E-II, C, P	38 (248)[2]	0	0	19 (136)[2]	57 (384)[2]
	Diesel Attack Submarines	F, Z, T	46	5	2	28	81
	ASW Ships	MOSKVA	0	0	2	0	2
		KARA, KRESTA II	4 (32)[2]	1 (8)[2]	3 (24)[2]	2 (16)[2]	10 (80)[2]
		KRIVAK, KASHIN DLGM Mod KILDIN	3 (12)[2]	7 (28)[2]	3 (12)[2]	0	13 (52)[2]
		KASHIN DLG, KANIN					
	Missile Ships	KYNDA, KRESTA I	5	2	8	5	20
		KILDIN, KRUPNYY	2 (8)[2]	1 (4)[2]	2 (16)[2]	3 (20)[2]	8 (48)[2]
	Cruisers	SVERDLOV	0	0	0	2 (3)[2]	2 (3)[2]
	SAM Destroyers	KOTLIN	2	1	4	3	10
			2	1	3	2	8
	Reconnaissance Aircraft (long range)	BEAR D	25	0	0	21	46[3]
	ASW Aircraft	BEAR F	12	0	0	0	14[3]
		MAY	25	8	0	22	57[3]
		MAIL	21	12	30	34	104[3]
	Strike Aircraft	BADGER C, G	66 (66)[4]	71 (107)[4]	61 (79)[4]	91 (138)[4]	289 (390)[4]
	Strike Support Aircraft	BADGER D, E, J, K	26	13	2	28	69
		CUB B, C	2	2	2	2	8
		BLINDER C	0	3	3	0	6
		BADGER A (tanker)	21	15	15	27	81[3]

TABLE 1 (Continued)

DISPOSITION OF SELECTED ACTIVE SOVIET AND NSWP NAVAL FORCES (1 Dec 1974)

Mission	System	Class	Northern Soviet	Baltic E. Germ., Polish	Baltic Soviet	Black Rom., Bul.	Black Soviet	Caspian Soviet	Pacific Soviet	Total NSWP	Total Soviet
Seaward Defense and Support of landing operations	Conventional Attack Submarines	B, R, W, Q	19	4	17	4	22	9	21	8	88
	Gun Cruisers	CHAPAYEV, KIROV	0		3		0		0		3
	Destroyers	KOTLIN, TALLINN, SKORYY	6	1	9	0	9	0	13	1	37
	Escorts	RIGA, KOLA, MIRKA, PETYA	30	2	22	2	24	3	27	4	106
	Missile Patrol Boats	OSA, KOMAR, NANUCHKA	27(160)[2]	27(108)[2]	39(164)[2]	8(32)[2]	22(98)[2]	2(6)[2]	44(176)[2]	35(140)[2]	134(604)[2]
	Submarine Chasers	GRISHA, POTI, STENKA and other PC types	28	43	90	16	56	15	66	59	255
	Minesweepers and other mine warfare types	Various	54	86	89	49	39	12	74	135	268
	Amphibious Ships	ALLIGATOR LST	2	0	3	0	4	0	4	0	13
		POLNOCNY and other LSM/LSV	16	29	20	0	13	9	26	29	84
	Bombers	BEAGLE, BADGER A, BLINDER	0	8	58	0	30	0	0	8	109[3]
	ASW Helicopters	HORMONE, HOUND	60	18	37	16	87	0	79	34	275[3],[5]
	Coastal Missile Launchers		11	8	1	4	20	0	14	12	46

[1] Numbers in parentheses are the numbers of submarine-launched ballistic missiles.

[2] Numbers in parentheses are the numbers of surface-to-surface cruise missile launchers on the referenced submarines, surface ships, or patrol boats.

[3] These totals include 2 BEAR Fs, 2 MAYs, 7 MAILs, 3 BADGER A tankers, 12 ASW helicopters, and 21 bombers (BEAGLEs, BADGERs, BLINDERs) subordinated to Headquarters, Naval Aviation, Moscow.

[4] Numbers in parentheses are the numbers of air-to-surface missiles carried by these strike aircraft.

[5] Includes helicopters carried by the MOSKVA class and some other ships, and 3–6 HORMONE Bs (reconnaissance and target acquisition) in each Soviet fleet area.

If the conventional battle were going against them, we cannot rule out the possibility that they might initiate the limited use of tactical nuclear weapons. However, most evidence indicates that the Soviets believe it likely that a limited tactical nuclear exchange would, after a relatively brief period, escalate to a theater-wide nuclear war.

7. Because the need to be able to deliver the first nuclear salvo (and conversely, not to do so prematurely) becomes so important, the timing, manner, and circumstances of possible escalation (as well as deployment of nuclear weapons) have become of crucial interest in Soviet doctrinal discussions [   ] increasing flexibility of Soviet thinking [

          ] include:

— a preemptive strike;

— a limited tactical nuclear strike; or

— even a period without response, while attempts at negotiation presumably would be made to bring the war to a conclusion.

8. Judging from Soviet doctrine, we believe that the Soviets' aim in the early conventional phases of a war would be the destruction of enemy ground, air, and naval forces and of the greatest possible quantity of NATO's nuclear weapons and delivery systems. This would be done to disrupt or weaken the nuclear counterstrike the enemy is presumed to be preparing and to assure that the nuclear phase would occur under conditions most favorable to the USSR. Naval operations are seen as closely related to war developments on the Eurasion landmass, to requirements for a strategic strike against the US, and to the blunting of such a strike against the USSR. While the Soviets recognize the importance of naval operations for these purposes, we have no evidence that they have seriously considered a war conducted only at sea between the major powers. We do not believe they would choose to engage in such a war.

The Deterrence and Nuclear Strike Missions

9. A primary mission of the Soviet Navy is to furnish a deterrent to attack through the presence of a credible and survivable SSBN force and, in time of general war, to participate in the nuclear exchange and strike at soft targets such as military installations, industries, and government centers. In support of these missions, the Soviets routinely maintain four of their 33 operational Y-class SSBNs on station, two in the Atlantic and two in the Pacific, intending to be able to move most of them to firing areas in times of crisis or war. The new D-class SSBN, armed with the 4,200-nm SS-N-8 capable of reaching the US, Europe, or China even from base areas, recently began patrolling in the Barents and Greenland Seas. Patrols in those seas can be protected from Western air and surface ASW forces and require virtually no transit time (see Figure 2). In addition to the forces at sea, the Soviets appear to keep [   ] SSBNs ready for deployment [   ]

10. The effectiveness of the SSBN force in a general war would depend upon many variables, such as the timing and circumstances of the attack, Soviet survivability efforts, the effectiveness of SSBN command and control systems, and, not least, Soviet objectives. Under conditions of sufficient warning to get additional forces to firing stations, high survivability, and adequate functioning of command and control systems, the Soviets might currently expect as many as 400 sea-based missiles to reach their targets in an initial strike.[4] Under conditions of no warning, successful NATO damage-limiting operations, delays in command and control procedures, or a deliberate Soviet decision, the Soviets might launch only a few score missiles. Soviet SSBN strategic strike capabilities are thus strongly scenario-driven, but it is almost certain they could not be completely blunted.
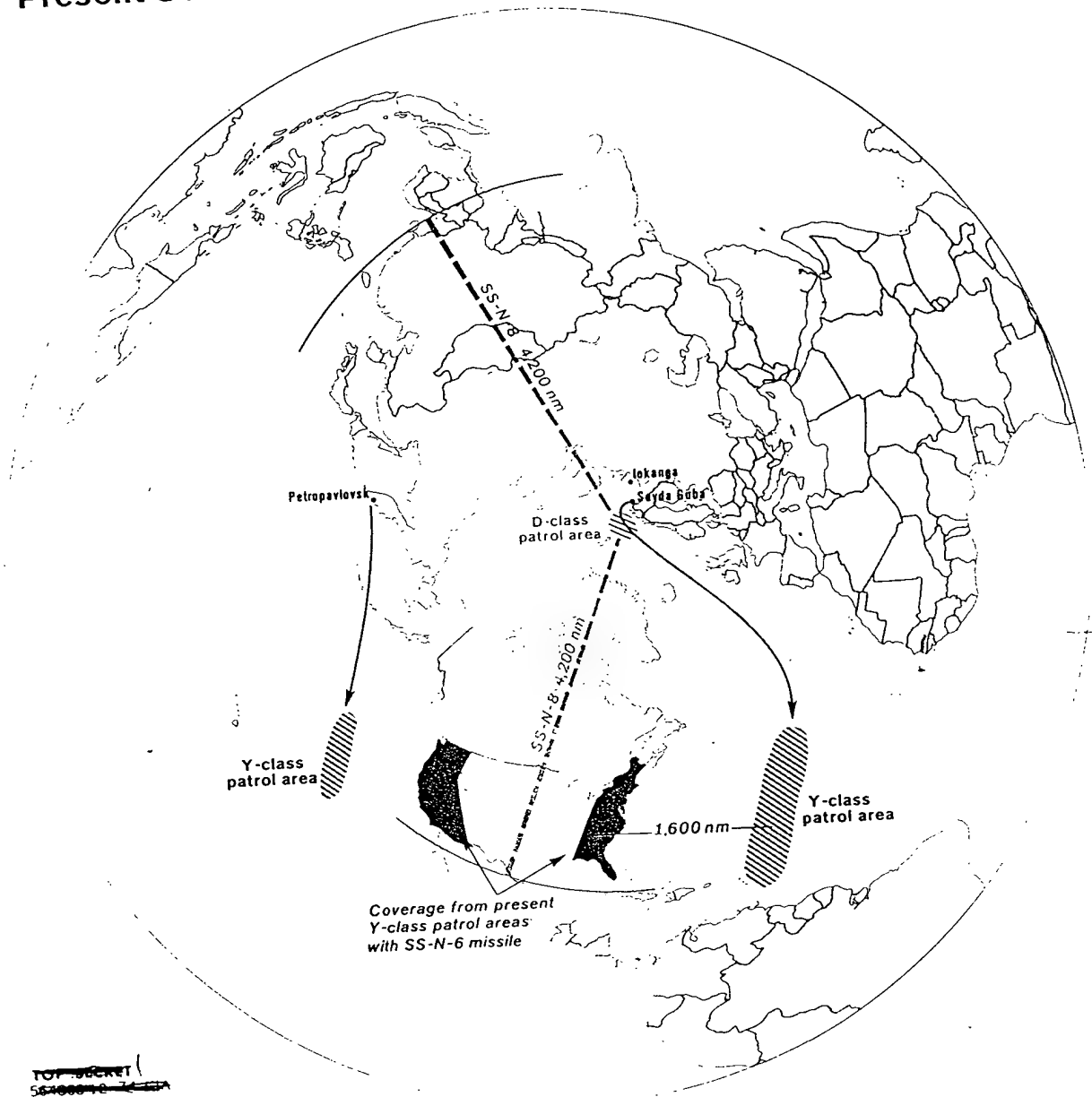
_____
[4] This Estimate is based on assumptions which a Soviet planner might make—such as a 30- to 60-day period to generate the force to an 80 percent availability, and a system reliability of about 85 percent.

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Present Soviet SSBN Patrol Areas

11. The Soviets are attempting to increase the survivability of their SSBN force in several ways. They are constructing, near SSBN bases, tunnels suitable for concealment and protection of the submarines, and have built dummy SSBNs probably to conceal deployment levels during crises or to mislead NATO targeting. [

]

12. Construction of the D-class and a follow-on class, possibly with a new missile, has already begun. Follow-on SLBM replacements for the SS-N-6 on the Y-class and the SS-N-8 on the D-class may already be decided on. These programs would be carried out during the next decade.

Anti-Strike Fleet Activity

13. The Soviets include operations against Western carrier strike forces and missile submarines under the rubric of weakening ocean-launched nuclear strikes. Soviet doctrine calls for both to be carried out simultaneously as first priority tasks. Each would involve use of all available means of surveillance and attack, if possible in coordinated operations, based on obtaining maximum prior warning and on defending in depth. (Figure 3 shows a concept of a wartime disposition of Soviet naval forces in the North Atlantic.)

14. Major exercises since 1970 have demonstrated the Soviet approach to, and capabilities for, a large ocean surveillance operation coordinated with strike activities in various areas. They indicate that in the northeastern Atlantic, Norwegian Sea, northwestern Pacific, and eastern Mediterranean the burden of detecting and tracking NATO carrier task forces would be borne primarily by land-based electronic surveillance, as well as by aircraft, submarines, and surface ships, supported by ELINT and radar reconnaissance satellites. [

] We believe that, given time to coordinate all of these assets, the Soviets would probably be able to locate and track most US aircraft carriers in these areas.
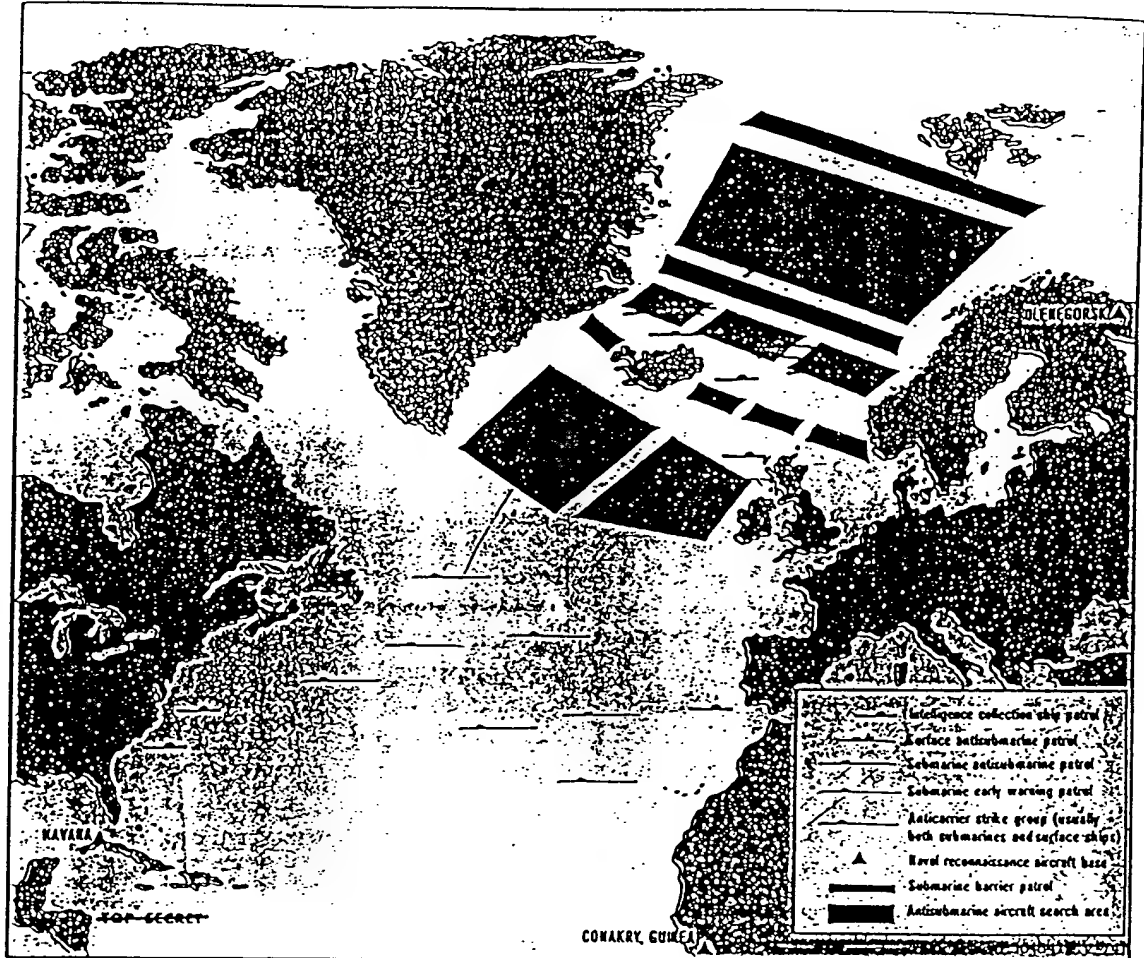
15. Exercises have shown that submarines and ASM-equipped aircraft would mount attacks on carrier task groups as they approach the USSR. As the enemy forces move closer to the USSR, antiship missile-equipped surface ships, missile-carrying patrols boats, and coastal defense missiles would additionally be brought to bear.

16. In the past eight years the Soviets have deployed five new antiship cruise missile systems and are preparing to deploy two more. These can be launched from aircraft, surface ships, and surfaced or submerged submarines; they fly at various flight profiles, at speeds ranging from subsonic to more than three times the speed of sound, use infrared and active radar homing, and can hit targets at distances of 5 to 300 nm. Those with ranges of 30 nm or less largely use autonomous targeting and guidance. Those fired to longer ranges generally require a forward observer, usually a reconnaissance version of the BEAR long-range bomber or, in a preemptive strike, a surface "tattletale." The Soviets also have a few shipborne helicopters equipped for target acquisition missions, and the potential exists for missiles to be targeted in the future by satellite.

17. In addition to cruise missiles, the Soviets are developing the SS-NX-13 antiship ballistic missile. [

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Figure 3

Concept of a Wartime Disposition in the North Atlantic

the same size booster as the SS-N-6, it could be deployed on Y-class submarines with little modification to the launch tubes. Although this would require replacing strategic ballistic missiles, it would mean a gain in operational flexibility that might be useful if the SS-NX-13 were used to counter Western task forces. If deployment were to be on a new class of submarine or surface ship, it would probably be under construction by now. No such new platform has yet been identified.

has a maximum range of about 400 nm.

18. The SS-NX-13 was almost certainly initially intended for deployment on a submarine. As it uses

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Figure 4

19. The capabilities inherent in the BACKFIRE variable-geometry-wing bomber will significantly improve the strike capability of the Soviet Navy against Western surface forces. Its variable flight profile and high speed capabilities—Mach 2 at high altitudes—will give it a higher probability of penetrating carrier defenses in the open ocean than is the case with the BADGER aircraft. The BADGER and BLINDER aircraft which have to date composed the strike capability of the Soviet Naval Aviation are limited by range generally to areas north of most sea lanes to Europe. The BACKFIRE's increased range will give it coverage over all major sea lanes to Europe and extend Pacific Ocean coverage to Hawaii (see Figure 5). Equally important, BACKFIRE's capability for high subsonic, low-level flight will also give it far more capability than the BADGER to cross potentially hostile land areas—such as Turkey and Greece—and operate over the Mediterranean, a capability that in practical terms the Soviets have not had. We believe that the BACKFIRE will be operational with Naval Aviation in 1975.

20. We believe that coordinated strikes against Western carriers would be at least partly successful. The degree of success would largely depend upon the locations of the carriers, whether the Soviets used conventional or nuclear weapons, and whether surprise was achieved. If nuclear weapons were used in a surprise attack, most or all US carriers in the Norwegian Sea and the northeastern Atlantic, in the northwestern Pacific, and in the eastern Mediterranean could be destroyed. Timely warning of a Soviet attack would allow the carriers to take action which would probably assure the survival of some carriers, especially against a conventional attack.

Antisubmarine Operations

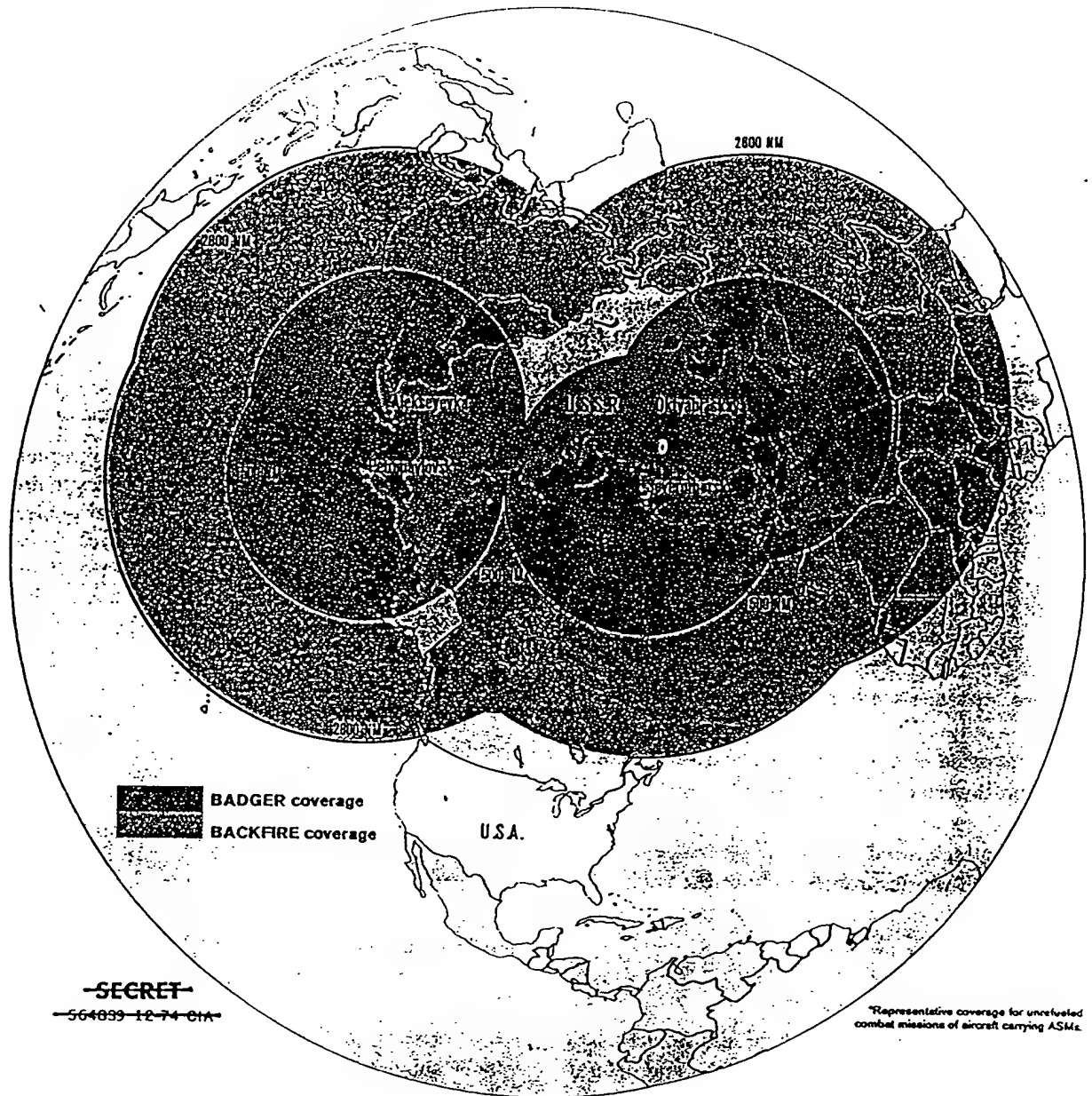21. The antisubmarine task of the Soviet Navy is twofold—countering Western SSBNs and defending against attacks from Western general purpose submarines. Anti-SSBN operations are probably planned in the Norwegian Sea, North Atlantic, Mediterranean, and western Pacific. In time of crisis the Soviets probably plan to station intelligence ships and nuclear attack submarines off Western SSBN bases, to attempt to detect and track missile submarines leaving port, and to conduct area searches in likely Polaris operating areas. Diesel submarines, backed up by ASW aircraft, would form barriers in choke points such as the Greenland-Iceland-UK gap. Combined operations using ASW ships, ASW aircraft, and occasionally nuclear attack submarines have been practiced. Underwater communications, explosive signaling, IFF (Identification: Friend or Foe), and ranging systems have been developed to make tactical command and control of these operations more effective. There have been attempts to trail Western SSBNs leaving their bases. None appears to have been successful, but we expect the attempts to continue.

22. Soviet military doctrine emphasizes attacks against enemy nuclear-capable forces in the opening stage of a major war. In an intercontinental nuclear war, this would include attacks by naval forces against enemy missile submarines at sea and nuclear strikes against missile submarine bases. In a theater war, confined to Europe and the surrounding ocean areas, the Soviets would, by definition, refrain from attacking submarine bases in the US. But theater war doctrine apparently calls for attacking deployed submarines at the onset of hostilities, whether conventional or nuclear. However, it is possible, if the Soviets saw the opportunity to contain the conflict at conventional levels and given the low probability that they could actually destroy an SSBN, that the Soviet political leadership would direct the Navy to refrain from attacking enemy missile submarines in order to reduce the possibility of escalation to intercontinental nuclear war. Such a policy would pose difficulties in execution, since naval forces would be unable to distinguish enemy missile submarines from attack submarines. In a more limited war, the Soviets almost certainly would

Figure 5

Naval BADGER and BACKFIRE Coverage*

2600 NM

2600 NM

U.S.S.R.

BADGER coverage

BACKFIRE coverage

U.S.A.

*Representative coverage for unrefueled
combat missions of aircraft carrying ASMs.

not try to attack enemy ballistic missile submarines, although they might increase their attempts to track some of them.

23. In the past six years the Soviets have deployed or had under development four new ASW missile or rocket systems that can send a homing torpedo or depth bomb to ranges of 5 to 30 nm. Two are launched from a surface ship and two are launched from a submerged submarine. All, except possibly one, are suitable for either nuclear or conventional warheads. Most of the ships carrying these weapons utilize sonars with ranges of 10,000 yards or less and would therefore require assistance from some other ASW unit in order to utilize the full range of these weapons.

24. The new KIEV aircraft carrier has, according to the Soviets, been developed as an ASW ship, and its equipment appears to support this identification. When operational, in late 1975 or 1976, it could act as a command and control center for an ASW task force, as has the MOSKVA. Its helicopters will, like the MOSKVA's, help locate submarines, and its V/STOL fighters will give the task force a better air defense and reconnaissance capability at sea, thereby contributing to its ability to operate in a hostile environment. We believe, judging from space available, a probable ASW mission of the ship, and standard Soviet aircraft squadron complements, that the most likely load of aircraft will be about 12-15 V/STOL fighters and 20 helicopters.

KIEV Carrier
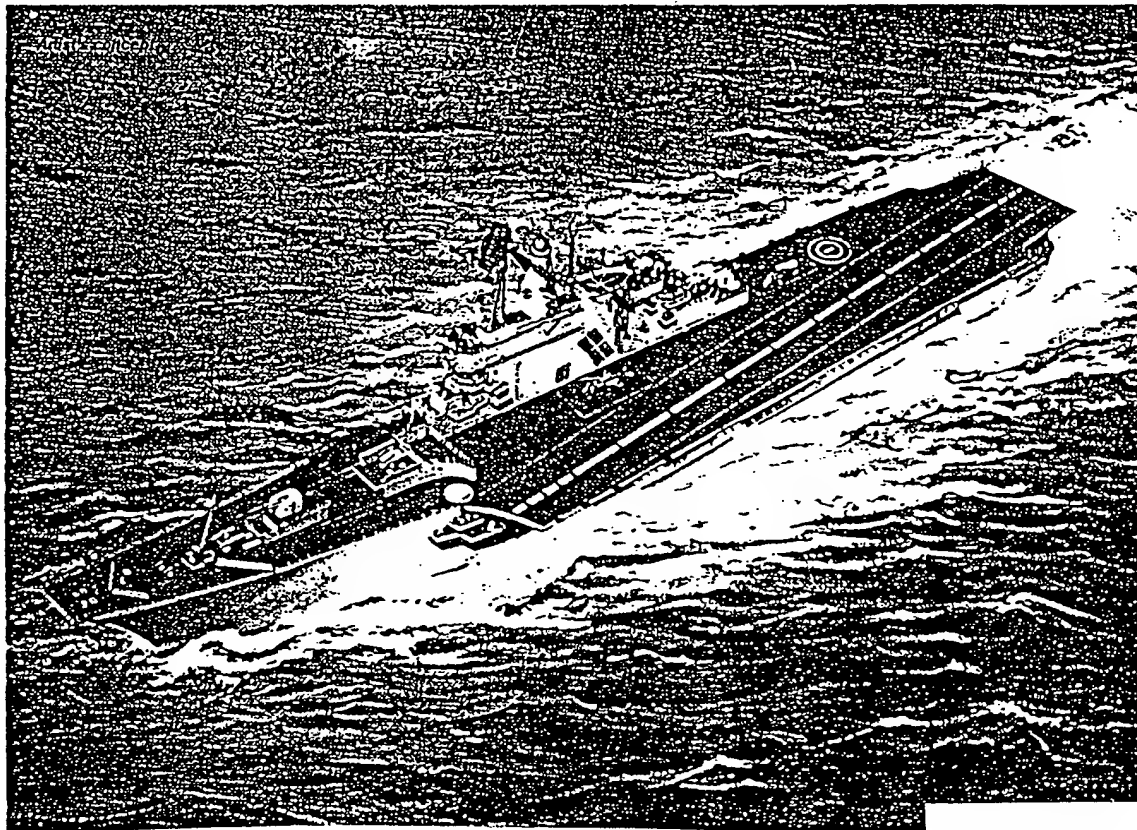
Soviet VSTOL Fighter
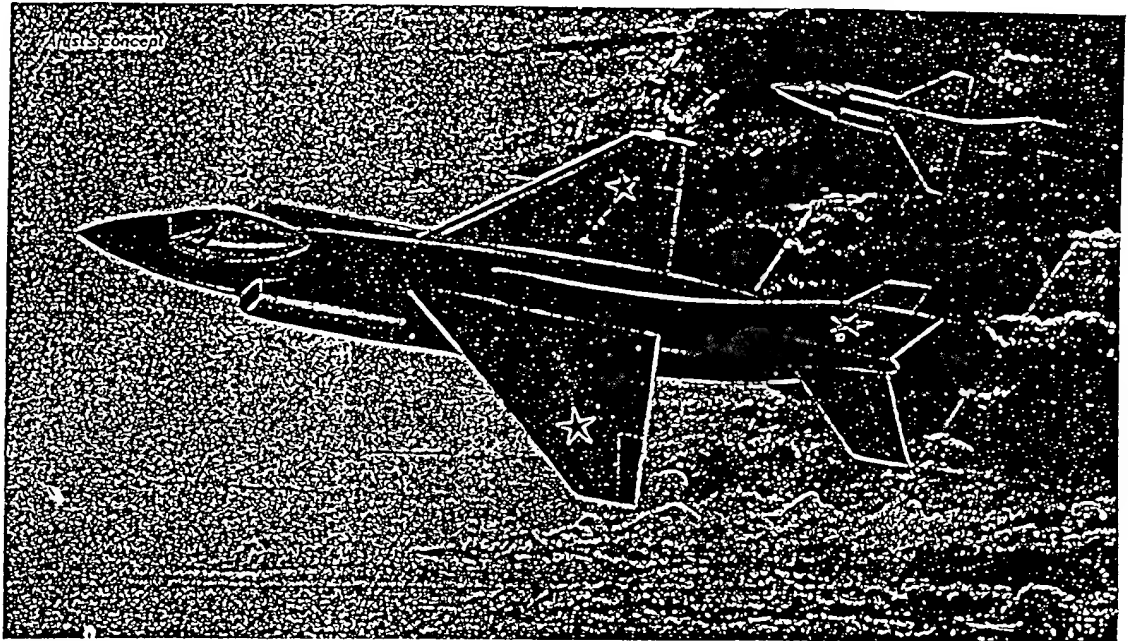
25. Despite new ASW platforms with improved sensors and weapons, and emphasis on ASW training and research, the Soviets still have no effective capability for open-ocean ASW. This limitation stems primarily from the USSR's lack of fixed sensors with an ability to detect submarines at long ranges within the broad expanses of the open ocean, from the short ranges of the Navy's ASW sensors, and from the relative quietness of US submarines. We foresee no developments in acoustic or non-acoustic detection systems or in submarine quieting that would permit the Soviets to obtain a effective open-ocean anti-SSBN capability during the next decade.[6] However, we cannot exclude the possibility that they might be able to detect a few in limited areas such as the western approaches to the Barents Sea, or in strategic choke points, such as the Greenland-Iceland-UK gap. We do not expect that Soviet forces will have systems for the reliable detection of Western attack submarines beyond the range of the latters' weapons systems during the period of this Estimate.

[*] The Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency believe that several of the nonacoustic methods currently known to be under investigation by the Soviets offer potential for improving their detection of nuclear submarines and thus could provide them with a capability to threaten the survivability of a portion of the US SSBN force deployed in the open ocean. The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy, and the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force, share this view.

Securing the Sea Frontiers

26. In a campaign on the Eurasian continent, the highest priority of the Soviet Navy, next to guarding against attacks on the USSR, would be to ensure that Soviet sea frontiers were not open to attack and that, conversely, they were open to use by the USSR. The Soviet and other Warsaw Pact navies have concentrated large numbers of small coastal patrol and ASW ships, mine warfare craft, short-range submarines, and ASW aircraft in the Black, Baltic, and Barents Seas and the Sea of Japan and

have deployed both mobile and fixed coastal defense missile batteries. These forces continue to receive the latest equipment and have not declined in overall capabilities despite the emphasis on forces intended for more forward deployments.

27. The Soviet and other Warsaw Pact navies could probably establish control of the Baltic and Black Seas early in a conflict, and plant mines to prevent penetrations by Western naval forces. In the Sea of Japan and the Barents Sea enemy surface units could also be destroyed quickly, but Western nuclear submarines would present a more difficult problem, and the Soviets probably could not protect their ships from this threat.

28. A key problem for the Soviet Navy in a war would be assuring naval passage to the open oceans from the Baltic Sea, Black Sea, and Sea of Japan, and denying to enemy forces the strategic straits into these seas and the land areas near the Northern Fleet bases. Amphibious raids or counteroffensives would probably be conducted to outflank NATO forces in coastal theaters. Amphibious assaults would be limited to regimental size in the Northern Fleet, to two regiments in the Pacific and Black Sea areas, and to about three regiments in the Baltic. In the Baltic, amphibious operations would probably include Polish amphibious troops and would be coordinated with airborne assaults and with major ground offensives.

29. The effectiveness of these operations would probably vary widely. The North Cape of Norway could probably be taken fairly readily if the Norwegian brigade normally deployed there were not

reinforced. In the Baltic, Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces could probably capture the Danish islands if the Danish air and ground forces on Zealand were not reinforced and link up with land forces on Jutland. In the Black Sea area, strong Turkish defenses and difficult terrain would make a coordinated land and sea assault on the Turkish Straits more difficult. The Soviets probably could not seize these straits quickly using conventional weapons. Soviet Naval Infantry capabilities in the Pacific are insufficient for conducting amphibious assaults on the Japanese home islands to secure exits from the Sea of Japan. Moreover, such assaults would obviously broaden a war to include Japan, and, short of nuclear war, would certainly be successfully resisted by the substantial Japanese Self Defense Forces.

Interdiction of Sea Lines of Communications

30. The importance to the Soviets of interdiction of NATO's sea lines of communication and the effort expended on this mission would depend to a great extent on the nature and length of a NATO-Warsaw Pact war. Soviet military doctrine emphasizes a short war, in which interdiction of sea lines of communication would be unlikely to have an important impact on the outcome of the conflict. In a short war, or in the early stages of a protracted one, the large number of nuclear torpedo attack and cruise-missile submarines and ASW-equipped aircraft that would be most effective against shipping would almost certainly be engaged in other tasks. The interdiction mission therefore does not appear to have a high priority in a short war, and as such has not driven force procurements over the past two decades.

31. If the conventional phase of a war were to continue for some time, which the Soviets view as unlikely, they would probably mount an interdiction campaign. Some Soviet writings have stressed NATO's dependence on sea lines of communications as a vulnerability to be exploited. The Soviets

would have major problems in doing so, however. They do not have forward bases for resupply, and attempts to operate resupply ships beyond Soviet-controlled waters could be easily countered. Thus, their submarines would almost certainly have to return through choke points to an uncertain resupply situation. Moreover, the North Atlantic sea lanes are basically beyond range of all but BEAR and BACKFIRE aircraft. In a prolonged conventional conflict, therefore, the Soviets could effect attrition on NATO shipping, but could not disrupt it completely.

32. It is unlikely that, outside of direct involvement in a war with the West, the USSR would attack Western sea lines of communication, however vulnerable. The Soviets did not do so in the Vietnam or Arab-Israeli wars. Such an attack would expose their own large merchant, fishing, and oceanographic fleets to retaliatory attack. If undertaken with small forces, such a campaign could lead to loss of the forces; if undertaken with large forces, it could lead to an expanded war that would not be justified by the probable gain.

A Projection/Intervention/Sea Control Mission?

33. Although the Soviets are deploying their naval forces further from the USSR and are building new aircraft carriers and amphibious and logistic ships, they are not developing a capability to intervene in distant areas analogous to that of the US forces. The small Soviet amphibious lift and assault capability has been developed for use in the areas adjacent to the USSR, and it is not growing at a sufficient rate or with the type of ship necessary to support a significant strategic projection of power ashore against substantial opposition. Moreover, the USSR has no ships for helicopter assault or air cover for distant amphibious assault. The KIEV will have a limited potential along this line, but it was probably not constructed for this purpose, nor will it represent a very substantial capability.

34. Such intervention at a distance from the USSR implies control of the sea at least at the scene of action and over Soviet lines of communication; a major intervention involving projecting power ashore in distant areas could therefore not be undertaken against significant opposition and without air cover. And in those areas in which the Soviets might feel compelled to intervene in support of an ally or client state, they would most likely have access to ports or airfields into which to bring their forces. They thus probably do not see the need for, nor do they seem to be building, naval forces for intervention in distant areas against substantial opposition.

35. For such a projection mission, the Soviets would require some control of the sea. For the Soviets, sea control in the oceans is not a mission in itself, but rather only a means for establishing a favorable local balance in order to carry out other tasks. In the Soviet concept, sea control means that naval task forces must be viable in a hostile environment and thus must be able to defend themselves against air, surface, and subsurface attack in order to perform their primary mission. While the Soviets are taking many steps to improve their warfighting capabilities, they are not following the US path. The new KIEV-class ASW aircraft carrier,[7] for example, is different from US ASW and attack carriers (see Figure 6). The KIEV represents a Soviet approach to a command ship for a task force that would better be able to maintain its position in the open ocean against attack, and at the same time carry out its combat assignments.

36. Even with this added capability, however—and there will be only two operational KIEV-class ships by 1980—Soviet ability to sustain combat at sea for long periods will be severely circumscribed by logistics-related weaknesses. The relative priori-

ties in Soviet ship design and the ships' limited underway replenishment capability constrain Soviet abilities for sustained combat at sea. The current forward posture of the Soviet Navy is based upon support from auxiliaries and merchant ships in anchorages and in Third World ports and presumes a non-hostile environment.

37. If an ability to carry on sustained conflict in distant areas were a high priority goal of the Soviet Navy, it would be developing less vulnerable replenishment capabilities and combatants better suited for this task. More than a decade after the first appearance of an underway-replenishment oiler, the Navy has only 14 such oilers, and still has only three ships for underway replenishment of solid stores. A new class of underway-replenishment oiler is being built at a rate of only one a year. A large ship which might be a multiple-stores-replenishment ship is under construction, but evidence on its role is inconclusive. Thus Soviet development of underway replenishment is growing, but at a slow rate in relation to the relatively large number of ships that might be serviced.

38. These apparent shortcomings are critical only if the Soviet Navy is to fight a sustained war of the kind the US Navy is suited to fight, at the end of long sea lines of communication. We believe that the Soviets do not expect they will have to do this. They recognize the importance to the US Navy of sea control in broad areas, but also recognize that they are not dependent on long sea lines and require sea control only in a few vital areas.

III. TRENDS IN SOVIET NAVAL ACTIVITIES

39. During the past decade the Soviet Navy has become an increasingly visible, capable, and politically important force. Continuous Soviet naval operations outside of home waters basically began in 1964, but the Navy remains most active around
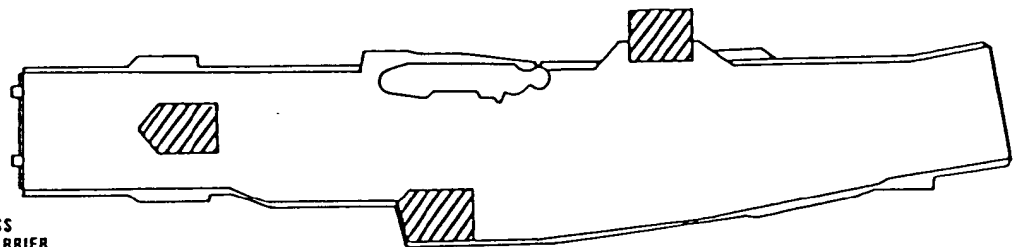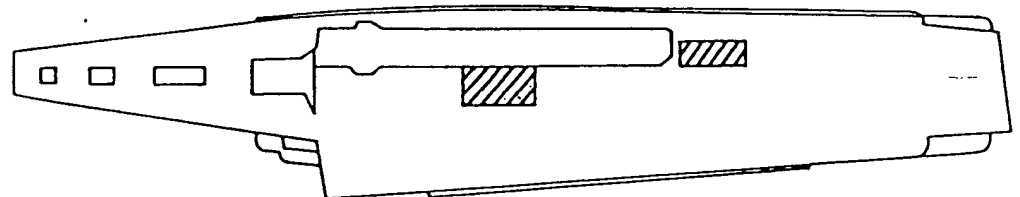
Figure 6

Aircraft and Helicopter Carriers

SCALE DIMENSIONS IN FEET

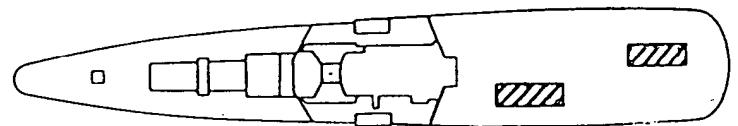1,100   1,000   900   800   700   600   500   400   300   200   100   0
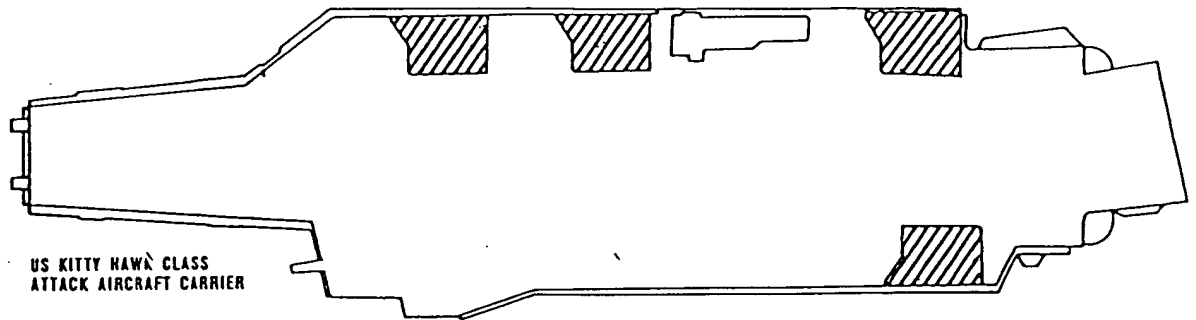
US KITTY HAWK CLASS
ATTACK AIRCRAFT CARRIER

US HANCOCK CLASS
ASW AIRCRAFT CARRIER

SOVIET KIEV CLASS
AIRCRAFT CARRIER

SOVIET MOSKVA CLASS
ASW HELICOPTER CARRIER

FLIGHT DECK AREA

AIRCRAFT ELEVATORS

564845 12-74 CIA

The KITTY HAWK class is typical of modern US attack carriers; the HANCOCK class ASW carriers have been retired. The Soviet KIEV class lacks the catapults and arresting gear used on US carriers and can only handle V/STOL aircraft and helicopters. The MOSKVA class could support limited V/STOL operations but is basically designed for helicopters only. In contrast to the large clear decks and elevators of the US carriers, both of the Soviet ships have massive superstructures and carry various weapons systems in addition to aircraft.

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the periphery of the Soviet Union. Activities away from home waters have included ballistic missile submarine patrols, surveillance of US and NATO naval forces, showing the flag, and training. A major purpose of these deployments has been to assimilate operational experience in likely areas of wartime employment with new ships, weapons, and supporting systems. Out-of-area operations by Soviet naval forces have also been undertaken to promote Soviet interests, particularly in Third World areas.

Out-of-Area Activity

40. Since the mid-1960s, the Soviet Navy has diversified its areas of operations. Indian Ocean operations began in 1968, Carribbean deployments began in 1969, and more distant operations in the Atlantic and Pacific have been undertaken in the 1970s. However, the rapid growth rate in naval activity away from home waters that characterized the late 1960s has slowed in the 1970s (see Figures 7 and 8). Virtually the only increase in the last four years has been related to unusual circumstances: minesweeping operations in 1974 in the Gulf of Suez, the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, and the harbor clearing operations in Bangladesh in the aftermath of the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war. The following table shows an approximate average level of deployment in distant areas during 1971-1974:

41. Some three-fourths of Soviet naval out-of-area activity takes place in the North Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Pacific and is related primarily to training for operations against Western navies. The Soviets deploy their newest and best ships in the areas nearest to the USSR and react to the presence of Western naval forces positioning by these ships to track or attack them and by occasionally simulating tactical strikes against them. Mediterranean operations are also politically useful in that the Soviet naval presence lends credibility to the USSR's commitment to protect its Arab clients. The ouster of most of the Soviet military from Egypt in 1972 has not resulted in any major changes in Soviet naval activity; the greatest loss was the reconnaissance, ASW, and strike support provided by Soviet Naval Aviation in Egypt.

42. Soviet naval activities in the Indian Ocean, the Caribbean, and West African waters, on the other hand, have reflected largely political rather than military concerns. The Soviet forces normally deployed to these areas make many port calls but do not otherwise operate to a great extent. Soviet task groups stationed in the Indian Ocean and West African waters have generally been composed of older ships. However, newer ships and submarines have been deployed periodically to counter US presence and to impress observers.

	Caribbean[1]	Atlantic[2]	Mediterranean	Indian	Pacific
Ballistic Missile Submarines (on station)	—	3	—	—	2
Surface Combatants	—	2	15	3[3]	0[4]
General Purpose Submarines	—	1	12	1	1
Amphibious Ships	—	1	3	1	—
Logistic Support and Other[5]	1	16	24	10	12

[1] Since 1971, 2 surface combatants and 1 submarine have normally visited Cuba twice a year.

[2] There are typically 2 surface combatants and, twice a year, some 8 general purpose submarines, in transit.

[3] Excludes ships in Bangladesh and Gulf of Suez operations.

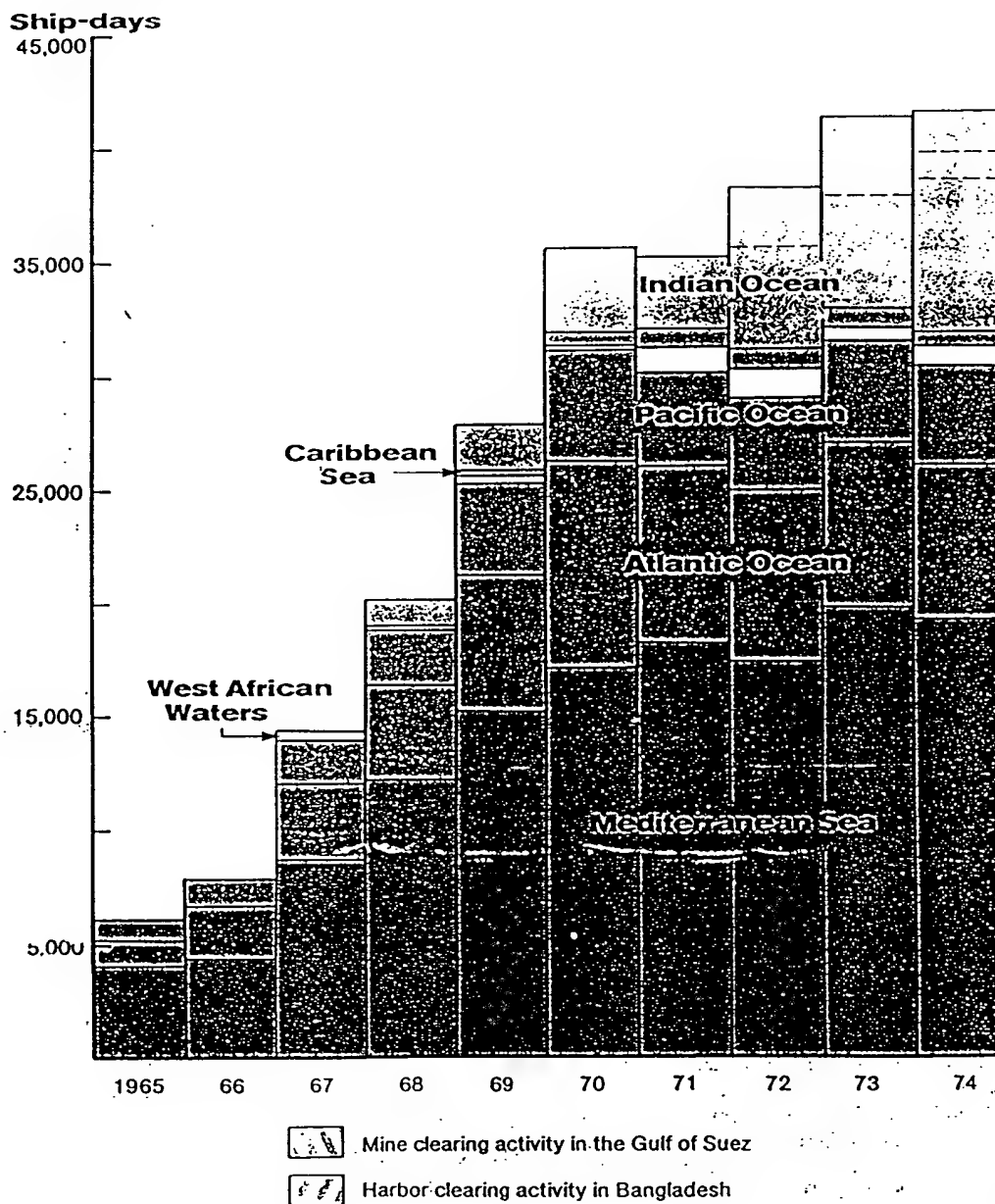[4] There is typically 1 unit in transit to or from the Indian Ocean.

[5] Oceanographic, space support, intelligence.

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Figure 7

Operations of Soviet General Purpose Naval Forces Outside Home Waters, 1965-74

Mine clearing activity in the Gulf of Suez

Harbor clearing activity in Bangladesh
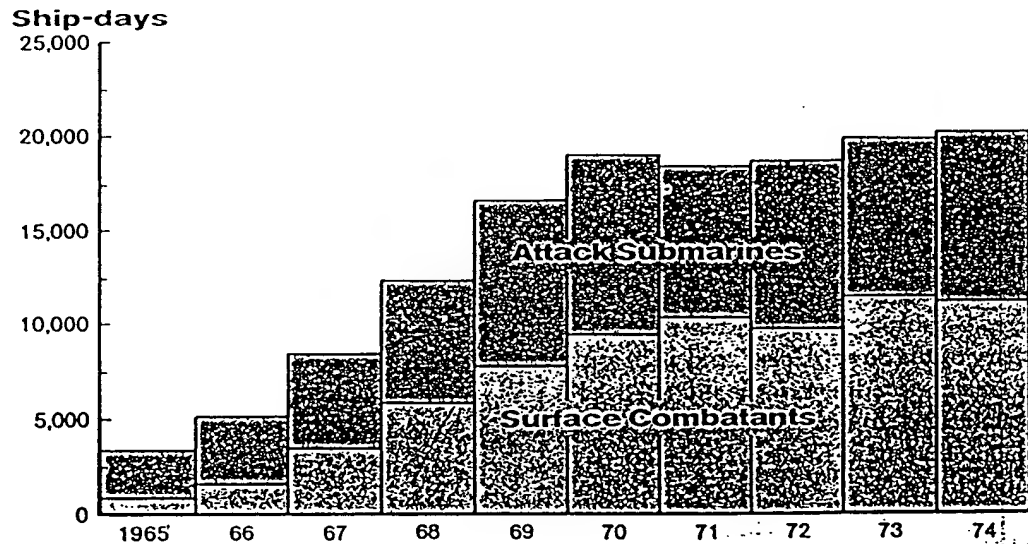
SECRET

Figure 8

Operations of Soviet Naval Surface Combatants and Attack Submarines Outside Home Waters, 1965-74*

Ship-days

*Excludes the harbor clearing operations in Bangladesh (1972-1974) and the minesweeping activity in the Gulf of Suez (1974).

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IV. USES OF THE SOVIET NAVY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SOVIET POLICY IN PEACETIME

Peacetime Operations in Soviet Policy[8]

43. Since the mid-1960s the Soviet leadership has actively used the Navy to support its economic and political influence around the world. This relationship between Soviet political objectives and naval actions—together with other factors—has resulted in a broader spectrum of Soviet naval activities. The Soviets probably believe that their strategic retalia-

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* In a sense, foremost on the scale of peacetime uses of the Soviet Navy is the use of the SSBN fleet, along with the SRF and LRA, as the strategic deterrent to US attack. In the eyes of Admiral Gorshkov, Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Navy, the SSBN is the most effective deterrent because of its relative invulnerability. The uses of the SSBNs were separately discussed in Section II.

tory power is now such that the US would be inhibited from expanding an incident involving US and Soviet naval forces into war. They probably believe as well that US commitment to a policy of detente and reevaluation of US overseas commitments in the wake of the Vietnam experience further inhibit the US. Finally, the Soviet Navy's capabilities for peacetime operations in distant areas have improved as new ships have been added to the force and access has been gained to facilities overseas. It is in this context that the Soviets are using their naval presence in distant areas to demonstrate their superpower status and to promote Soviet overseas interests in general. The Soviet leaders realize, however, that their freedom to use naval power in support of policy is not absolute and that they, too, are constrained in their actions by the deterrent relationship with the US.

44. These peacetime operations are justified in the ideologically "correct" terms of supporting and protecting selected regimes in the Third World. Inherently, the role of the Navy involves protecting Soviet citizens and merchant, fishing, and other economic interests. Moreover, Soviet military writers see deterrence or restraint of US naval actions in opposition to Soviet interests as a peacetime, but clearly military, role of the Navy. The Soviets have speculated, for example, that the US Navy could not now repeat a landing such as that in Lebanon in 1958 because of the presence of Soviet naval forces in the Mediterranean.

45. As the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Navy, Admiral Gorshkov, has put it, the Navy is a "plenipotentiary of the Soviet Union" and a "powerful factor in creating conditions for building Socialism and Communism." In non-ideological terms, he has pointed out that past Russian failure to pay proper attention to the Navy led to failure in achieving peacetime policy objectives, and that states which have failed to use naval power have not been able to maintain their status as great powers. Underlying Gorshkov's rhetoric, we believe, is a Soviet decision to use naval forces more extensively in furthering Soviet foreign policy objectives in peacetime.

46. The Soviets engage in maritime activities in peacetime to promote the foreign policy interests of the USSR in many ways and for many purposes.

— The most elementary is showing the flag through port calls by merchant and fishing ships, oceanographic and hydrographic ships, and finally (starting in the mid-1960s) by surface combatants. The first visits to a country have typically been publicized as reflections of the USSR's goodwill, while later port calls tend to be publicized less extensively and are frequently only for routine logistical support.

— The Soviets have on two occasions used naval demonstrations in concert with diplomacy to obtain the release of detained crews of their merchant and fishing ships.

— The Navy has been used in low risk shows of limited force designed to support small client states. These actions have generally involved naval forces that were small, but the most powerful in the area.

— The USSR has also used its Navy in attempts to constrain US and other Western forces in crisis situations, as in successive Arab-Israeli wars, the Jordanian civil strife in 1970, and the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971. Soviet objectives have been to reduce US freedom of action in the projection of naval power against a Soviet client or friendly power and to provide a visible symbol of Soviet concern. The Soviets apparently believe that the presence of their naval forces, though seldom equal in total combat capabilities to the US naval forces present during these crises, has had a restraining effect.

Balancing of Risk

47. The Soviets' doctrinal writings and propaganda provide indications that they might use their navy to intervene to aid client states and insurgent governments and to reduce the freedom of the US to intervene in conflicts ashore, even at the risk of conflict with the US. But actual Soviet behavior has been quite circumspect, and is probably a more accurate indicator of the balancing of concerns in crisis situations. In times of crisis, Soviet naval forces have acted with relative restraint. In the latest Arab-Israeli war, for example, Soviet activity in the Mediterranean centered on close surveillance of US aircraft carriers and major groupings of forces. While the Soviets' strengthened posture— the number of combatants was doubled—was intended to increase the credibility of the threat of more active Soviet involvement, their ships took no provocative actions. There were no increases in fleet readiness in other areas, nor was there any other naval activity that might have indicated an intent to take hostile naval action.

48. Thus the Soviet leadership has sought to influence US actions at some cost and risk, while at the same time keeping to a minimum the chances of actual US-Soviet conflict. (Moscow always carefully monitors crisis situations and directly controls the Soviet forces involved.) The Soviets have not sought to stop US actions by direct naval opposition but have acted through their naval presence to show concern and thereby restrain the US. The Soviets recognize that such behavior carries with it the risk of conflict with the US, and that this element must be considered. Thus, despite the fact that the Soviet actions incident to the Arab-Israeli war in October 1973 were more visible than in previous similar crises, at no time have the Soviets indicated they would be willing to push this risk to a purely naval challenge; rather, they have been clear in their desire not to do so. With the naval forces available to them, the Soviets probably will continue this approach throughout the period of this Estimate.

Future Levels of Peacetime Activity

49. Despite the growth of Soviet naval activities in distant areas in peacetime, there are both political and practical limits on the extent of future growth. In the absence of a major Western naval presence, the Soviet political gains from a naval presence can be achieved with a fairly low level of deployment. Occasional visits to Latin American ports, for example, support foreign policy, but a major Soviet naval task force in Latin American waters would be unwelcome. The Soviets have apparently assessed that a token naval presence is appropriate for West African waters. In the Indian Ocean, a large unilateral expansion of Soviet naval presence would not be well received either by the majority of the littoral powers or by China.

50. While the current level of about 25 surface combatants in distant areas can easily be held steady or increased dramatically for short periods, any substantial sustained increase in these deployments would require some shift in the pattern of ship dispositions and affect capabilities in home waters. Forces kept in home waters, however, are tied to more important tasks and probably would not be allowed to fall below specified levels. The slowing of the growth of out-of-area activity and slumps in routine deployments after a surge indicate that the practical limits, under present priorities, are being approached.

51. Over the longer term, as newer, more capable ships enter the force, there will be a moderate but steady increase in the number of ships available for distant operations. Any rapid increase in sustained distant deployments probably would require a more intensive shipbuilding effort, not only of surface combatants, but also of logistic support ships.

52. The deployment of military forces far from the USSR to serve political purposes is probably viewed as a requirement to be provided for after more central military concerns are served. The vast majority and most important of Soviet national security interests still involve the defense of the USSR on the Eurasian landmass and its immediate periphery in a limited or general war. The "state interests" that the Navy can serve in distant areas will likely continue to rank behind Soviet concerns about the potential danger from the US and China, and about possible opportunities in Europe.

Political Impact

53. The increase in naval activity over the past decade has been one of the several factors which have contributed to the USSR's superpower image. In that sense, the Navy is probably perceived by the Soviet leadership as an "effective" instrument of foreign policy. But aside from this, the Soviet Navy's record in this role has been mixed. Naval activity and port visits, particularly in the Third World, probably have improved the Soviet Union's position with some foreign political leaders, but have irritated others. Still others—perhaps a majority of Third World leaders—show little outward

concern about Soviet naval deployments. Nevertheless, in many countries, especially developed countries with a maritime tradition, naval activity is perceived as an important element in the international political balance. As long as this view continues to be prominent, the Soviet Navy's peacetime operations will have significant political impact.

V. CURRENT STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE SOVIET NAVY

54. The Navy's principal strengths stem from its status as the maritime arm of a basically continental power, with relatively little need for capabilities to protect extended sea lines of communication or to project power ashore in distant areas. As a result, the Soviet Navy has been free to concentrate efforts on "antinavy" capabilities, optimized to negate the projection and sea control capabilities of US and allied naval forces. These strengths have included:

— the development of strong capabilities against aircraft carriers operating within strike range of the USSR; and

— the maintenance of very strong capabilities against the operation of hostile surface forces in Soviet coastal waters;

— the ability to pose a significant submarine threat to Western sea lines of communications.

55. The same considerations also serve to explain some of the more obvious "weaknesses" of the Soviet Navy. Not having a major requirement to project power ashore, for example, the Navy has developed little capability of this kind. While the Soviets might not view this as a "weakness," it is nevertheless a limitation on their naval capability.

56. More importantly, however, the way in which the Soviets have chosen to develop naval forces has left them with real and serious vulnerabilities. In particular:

— While possessing impressive offensive strike capabilities, major elements of the Soviet naval

forces are relatively vulnerable to attack themselves.

— Because Soviet naval doctrine emphasizes the importance of the first strike and Soviet forces are strongly oriented toward a pre-emptive strategy, situations that gave the opposing force the initiative could leave the Soviets in a precarious position.

57. The Soviet Navy has been widely perceived as equal to or even superior to the US Navy, despite the many asymmetries in the two forces. This perception has given the Soviet Navy a degree of credibility which, while not always fully supported by its combat capabilities, has made it an important element in calculations of international political power.

58. To summarize, the Soviet Navy's major elements of strength are:

— The world's largest and most diversified inventory of antiship missiles deployed on submarines, aircraft, and surface ships and at shore sites.

— A large submarine force, including a growing number of modern nuclear-powered units (plus a number of modern as well as obsolescent diesel-powered units).

— A substantial force of land-based bombers, capable of strike and reconnaissance operations throughout the sea approaches to the USSR.

— A growing number of multipurpose surface combatants—generally faster and more extensively armed than Western counterparts.

— A strong and steadily improving capability for ocean surveillance (against surface targets), especially in and near the sea approaches to the USSR.

— Large and relatively modern sea frontier defense forces.

— Substantial offensive and defensive mine warfare forces.

— Secure and reliable communications systems, providing for a high degree of control and coordination between forces of various types.

— A substantial capability for electronic warfare.

— A well-developed shipbuilding industry, backed by large-scale research and development efforts.

59. The Soviet Navy's major weaknesses are:

— Geographic constraints requiring the maintenance of four separate fleets, making it difficult to concentrate forces or provide mutual support.

— Inadequate antisubmarine warfare capabilities,[*] notably:

– a lack of long-range open-ocean submarine detection capability;

– surface forces highly vulnerable to submarine attack; and

– submarine forces markedly inferior to Western counterparts in ability to detect and track opposing submarines.

— Limited (although improving) fleet air defense capabilities, especially:

– a lack of air cover beyond coastal waters; and

– little capability to provide area defense for deployed surface forces. Although newer units have good point defense systems, older surface combatants and all auxiliary forces remain highly vulnerable to air or missile attack.

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[*] The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy, notes that this weakness refers to current capabilities and that it may well change in the future as stated in footnote 6 on page 20.

— A poor capability for sustained combat operations, especially by surface forces deployed in distant areas, as evidenced by:

– surface combatants optimized for initial nuclear strike capability, with limited or no reloads for principal offensive weapons;

– surface combatants relatively vulnerable to combat damage;

– a limited capability to provide logistical support to forces at sea; and

– a logistics train highly vulnerable to interdiction.

— A potential vulnerability to electronic warfare measures, as seen by:

– ocean surveillance and target acquisition capabilities heavily dependent on emissions from opposing forces; and

– antiship strike capabilities almost totally dependent on complex electromagnetic systems for coordination of forces and guidance of missiles (in contrast to the flexibility of manned aircraft systems).

— Little capability to project power ashore in distant areas, to wit:

– no sea-based tactical air power; and

– amphibious forces designed and equipped only for short-range operations in support of the flanks of main ground forces.

— Difficulty in meeting conflicting requirements of nuclear and conventional warfare, with little or no at-sea capability to change or replenish warheads and missiles on surface and submarine units.

— No major *naval* allies.

— Lack of combat experience.

— Obsolesence of the larger number of forces built in the 1950s.

VI. FUTURE FORCES: CONSIDERATIONS AND OPTIONS

60. Future Soviet naval developments will probably bear a strong resemblance to the current trends. Throughout Soviet history, the Kremlin has consistently supported substantial investment in forces for defense of the sea frontiers, in submarines, and in shore-based naval aviation. Even given changes in the leadership, these forces are unlikely to decrease in importance. But the national leadership, in spite of pressures from the Navy on several occasions, has not always equally supported large surface combatants. Thus, investment in those combatants is likely to be more sensitive to leadership changes and might experience shifts in priority.

A Baseline Projection

61. Admiral Gorshkov, who has commanded the Soviet Navy under both Khrushchev and Brezhnev, recently provided a comprehensive rationale for the Navy's state and direction. He has emphasized the need for a "balanced" navy—that is, one which can carry out missions assigned it in nuclear war, nonnuclear war, or peacetime. He has called for surface ships which will have greater combat flexibility and be able to operate for longer periods in more distant areas. But he has also called for continued strengthening of submarine and naval air forces in support of general war capabilities. He foresees more capable and expensive individual units, but he is also operating within budgetary constraints. He apparently sees little prospect for solving the anti-SSBN problem with present technology, and gives scant mention to forces for projecting troops ashore. His writings also reflect an interest in interdiction of sea lines of communication.

62. Based on these considerations and ongoing construction programs, the Soviet Navy probably will:

— Continue a top priority for its SSBN deterrent force, expanding it, by the late 1970s, to the 62 modern units permitted under the SAL Interim Agreement. The 62nd unit is probably already under construction, and we believe all of them will be completed. If the proposed SAL Agreement covering the 1977-1985 period is successfully concluded, the Soviets will be limited to a total of 2,400 delivery vehicles—ICBMs, SLBMs, and intercontinental bombers—with no sublimit on SLBMs. This would require some reductions in the numbers and probably some changes in the mix of Soviet strategic forces. We believe the Soviets will retain a force at the level of 62 SSBNs until about 1980. But pressures will mount for change in the mix of strategic forces in the 1980s and we are uncertain how these will affect the SSBN force.

— Pursue an extensive program to refit new and probably MIRVed missiles to the SSBN force. This program is expected to start in the late 1970s, and to continue through the mid-1980s.

— Continue the high priority on combating enemy aircraft carrier task forces. Cruise missile submarines will continue to be built throughout the 1970s, as will major surface ships with antiship missiles. The SS-NX-13 antiship nuclear ballistic missile will most likely enter the force in the next year or two.

— Expand the area of potential strike coverage of Naval Aviation by introducing ASM-equipped BACKFIRE bombers, which will probably become operational in 1975.

— Pursue various approaches to antisubmarine warfare, with emphasis on the anti-SSBN problem. Improved ASW sensors and supporting systems and stand-off weapons will be more

extensively deployed. The construction rate of ASW submarines probably will increase.

— Continue to give the seaward defense missions about the same share of naval resources, which will provide yet additional generations of patrol, escort, and mine warfare ships and coastal defense missiles.

— Continue to improve slowly the amphibious forces. They will not, however, be developed to the extent that they could successfully project substantial Soviet power over great distances or against significant opposition.

— Build up the afloat support forces at a modest rate to permit more effective resupply and maintenance of Soviet forces in distant areas in peacetime, but not enough to support prolonged distant wartime operations.

63. This baseline projection thus sees a continued modernization of Soviet naval forces. New ships and submarines occasionally embodying innovative propulsion and armament concepts will continue to appear and to replace older units. But because the process moves at a slow pace, a decade from now some two-thirds of the Soviet Navy probably will still consist of ships that are currently operational, and the remaining third will result from program decisions now being made. With the addition of even more capable and expensive units, and limited resources, the numbers of ships will decline. Capabilities of the Navy as a whole, however, will improve. In particular, the Navy will become better suited for sustained peacetime deployments in distant areas.

64. The baseline projection assumes a continuation of past bureaucratic accommodations, of a collective political leadership like the present one, and of national policies of detente similar to those now being pursued. This projection reflects a judgment that there will be no disproportionate increase in allocation of resources to naval programs or major

expansion of facilities. The present share of resource claims has held steady for some time as a percentage of total defense expenditures and represents a share that can be held for some time to come.

Force Development Alternatives

65. It is possible, of course, that the Soviets will experience in the years ahead successes or frustrations that will lead them to expand their efforts in some particular areas:

— The detailed terms of the proposed Strategic Arms Limitations Agreement have not yet been formulated. However, within the apparent allowances of that proposed agreement, the Soviets could expand their SSBN force beyond 62 units at the expense of other strategic programs.

— Frustration in supporting distant client regimes might lead the Soviets to conclude that substantial forces are necessary to support "liberation" movements or to thwart US actions, and that sea control forces are needed to maintain sea lines of communication to these forces.

— The growth of the Chinese Navy could cause the Soviets to deploy a larger fleet in the Pacific without cutting back elsewhere, thus causing total efforts to increase.

— A leadership might come to the fore in Moscow that would be more adventurous and support expansion of the Navy as a symbol and instrument of a more aggressive foreign policy.

— A breakthrough in the anti-SSBN problem would almost certainly result in major investments. But our estimates do not indicate that such an eventuality is near.

66. On the other hand, it is possible that the level of resources devoted to the Soviet Navy will decline.

— Within the apparent allowances of the proposed SAL agreements, the Soviets could

choose to reduce the number of SSBNs in favor of other strategic programs.[10]

— Policymakers who are oriented more toward development of the civilian economy may come to the fore and be strong enough to reduce military expenditures—including those for the Navy.

— It may be that, with the completion of the SSBN construction program at 62 modern boats under the Interim SAL Agreement, some of the SSBN resources that were apparently a special net addition to Navy programs will not continue to be available to the Navy.

— A review of naval expenditures could lead to a cutback in construction of major surface ships and in operations in areas distant from Soviet shores, and to concentration on direct defense of the USSR.

67. Various courses of development could arise from pursuit of some of these alternatives. Pursuing all of them on the high side would require major changes in the pattern of resource allocations and a change in Soviet naval doctrine, and therefore is unlikely. Similarly, pursuing all of them on the low side is unlikely. But moderate adjustments to budget allocation could accommodate one or two of these changes, especially if they should be offsetting.

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[10] The Defense Intelligence Agency does not believe that the Soviets will choose to maintain a force of fewer than 62 modern ballistic missile submarines during the period of this Estimate; however, the Soviets may reduce the pace of SSBN production in the near term. The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy, and the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Army, share this view.

Decision Points

68. We believe that, if the Soviets were to pursue aspects of these force development alternatives, some early decision points would become apparent in building programs, in Soviet naval writings, and in leadership statements. Examples might include:

— The national leadership showing signs of becoming more receptive or less receptive to proposals from the military.

— The opening up or closing down of building ways for naval shipbuilding.

— The manner in which SSBN production resources are allocated after the 62nd SSBN is built.

— The writings of the Navy's leadership setting forth a change in the party line on naval policy.

— A decision made to deemphasize, say, domestic merchant marine construction and to allocate these resources to a more ambitious amphibious shipping program. The changes would be noticeable at building yards several years before they affected the force structure to any extent.

69. Given the bureaucratic continuities in Soviet naval efforts and the Navy's apparently integral place in Soviet policies with regard to the US, NATO, and the Third World, there is not much chance for the Navy to lose its position. However, given the general resource problems in the USSR, we do not expect substantial gains for the Navy at the expense of others. We thus expect basic changes to the current line to come about slowly, if at all.

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